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Waving the Checkered Flag: Pumas Come Together

By Angelica Arizmendi
News Writer

On April 22, 2017, Saint Joseph's College hosted its 55th annual Little 500 race. This annual race first began back in 1963 which originally lasted eight hours and twenty minutes. Back then SJC students raced wooden karts around the Evans Science and Arts Building the winner would receive a grand prize of \$50. Over time, the track course changed along with the duration of the race and the karts that were driven. Go-karts were first driven in 1970 and later intensified when the engines were standardized in all of the Go-Karts in 1980. Since then student drivers race for roughly two and a half hours in order to win the champion title as well as one of the following money prizes \$500 for the first, \$250 for second, \$125 for third, \$75 for fourth, and \$50 for fifth place winners.

Today, there are various events that take place leading up to the Little 500 event. Little 500 week kicked off with the Ms. Puma competition on



Above: The alumni took to the track in the annual alumni race and to lead the pace lap in the student race. Photo courtesy of Fr. Tim McFarland

Kametas, Kylie Hill, Jose Arteaga, and Sergej Stjepic. Alumni board members interviewed the top 5 candidates to determine the winner of this award. Sakelaris mentioned, the alumni board had a tough time deciding on the winner because they were all highly qualified candidates. In the end, Jose Arteaga was named the 2017 senior of the year award recipient.

Jose Arteaga says, "it is a huge honor to be named senior of the

made all of the work pay off... Everyone was having the time of their lives and just purely happy to be celebrating what it means to be a Puma."

Kicking off the morning was the alumni race followed by the student race at 2pm. Ten student drivers started their engines and raced to see who the 2017 Little 500 winner would be. After roughly two and a half hours, Logan James was named winner.

Logan was absolutely thrilled to have won this year. He states, "Little 500 was absolutely amazing this year. I have always had a feeling since I raced freshman year that if all of the variables were in line, I could come away with a victory. And this year proved to be right! With the race being shortened and two red flags, we only did about 135 laps, so it was one of the shorter Little 500 races I've seen. But, it didn't deter me from keeping my head in the race. It has been a dream of mine to win the big race for the past 10 years, and I feel so incredibly blessed to say I achieved that dream!"

Second place winner Jennifer Kearney mentioned how incredibly proud she was of her competitor Logan James and the rest of the drivers. She stated, "it was a true honor being a part of the last Little 500 and being the highest placed girl since 1981(a girl won that year)." Jennifer sends a huge thank you to all

of the alumni, faculty members and Pumas who made this event possible.

Little 500 did not disappoint this year. SJC alums were ecstatic to have gotten the chance to watch the race and catch up with their Puma family. Class of 1992 alum, Sheila G. Steimle stated, "I got everything out of this visit that I had hoped for. Walking the campus brought back memories and sadness. But most of all we felt the sense of community. Everyone was so friendly."

This year's Little 500 was a huge success. Students, alumni faculty and members of the Rensselaer community enjoyed spending time together, dancing, drinking and socializing. Although Saint Joseph's College will close its doors in the Fall, the Alumni Association has plans on keeping the tradition alive in the future.

Sakelaris, on behalf of the alumni board, commented, "The SJC Alumni Board was thrilled to be a small part of the Little 500 weekend activities. What an amazing weekend was had by all. Whether you graduated

Below: Seniors Jennifer Munson and Matt Foy, winners of the last Mr. and Mrs. Puma competitions. Photo courtesy of Fr. Tim McFarland.



50 years ago or you are a current student, your stories, memories, laughter and smiles brighten what has otherwise been a pretty sad place as of late. Puma Pride and Puma Spirit were on full display the entire weekend from one end of campus to the other. Truly we are a family and truly we will continue to be 'Involved for Life.'"

Above: Jose Arteaga, the 2017 Senior of the Year with Kris Sakelaris, receiving his award. Photo courtesy of Fr. Tim McFarland.



Above: #77 for the big win! Logan James champion of the 55th annual Little 500 Race. Photo Courtesy of Jeremiah Fields.

Wednesday followed by the Mr. Puma competition on Thursday. This competition consists of an introduction of the participants, talent, formal wear, and a question and answer portion. There were many talented SJC students competing for the titles this year. However, after a long deliberation, the guest judges announced that this year's Mr. and Ms. Puma winners were Jennifer Munson and Matt Foy.

Senior biology major, Jennifer Munson, mentioned that she went in "with the goal of wanting to get a laugh from people and having fun. I had butterflies in my stomach for the whole day but it turned out to be a good show for everyone."

On Friday night, Kris Sakelaris VP of the Alumni Association, hosted the 50th annual senior of the year dinner. Graduates of the class of 2017 voted on the top five candidates who they felt would be a great representative for the class. The top five candidates were Logan James, Robert

year by my fellow friends. I truly love Saint Joe with all my heart and it kills me everyday to know that my home will not open its doors in the Fall. I love Saint Joe and I will continue to live out its mission."

Throughout the week, Alumni began arriving and setting up their RVs and tents on the tailgate area of the football field. Alumni Village began filling up as of Friday day and continued to fill throughout the day on Saturday morning. Many efforts were made in order to make this Little 500 as memorable for everyone attending. There were various booths, games, and performers throughout the day on Saturday.

On both Friday and Saturday, students Sergej Stjepic, Justin Hays, and Jordan Phillips, along with many others collected \$17,000 from student clubs organized Puma Palooza, a series of concerts in the IM field. Hays commented, "While planning the event was stressful, the two day event was a celebration that

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Scenes from the Weekend...



Above: Hundreds of Pumas gathered for Little 500. Photo courtesy of Judith Dever.

“My daughter, Colleen ‘93, got me to Wagon Wheel where I enjoyed my first Wagon Master and Down on One Knee. I don’t think they were around in the 60s.” - Jim Riley

“I am still working to process it all. But without a shred of a doubt, I can say it was one of the most amazingly wonderful, loving, exciting, and memorable weekends of my entire life. It was an awesome event, in every single way a magical time.” - Brian Capouch

“I wouldn’t have wished for anything else.” - Ashlee Heminger ‘17

“I was really proud of the Puma Family this weekend. We were all expecting the worst, but instead the best showed through. My favorite part of being a puma is having a home away from home, and lifelong family bond that can’t be broken.” - Leanne Kooi ‘17

Below: 2017 Senior of the Year Candidates. Photo courtesy of Fr. Tim McFarland.



“I love the continued support of the Puma Family. The alumni still have a spirit of community and it was amazing to hear all of their stories!” - Liz Cuadrado ‘17



Above: Alumni camped out in RVs, vans, and tents in Alumni Village. Photo courtesy of Daniel Hoyng.



“The class of 1984 photo at the chapel [was my favorite memory this weekend].” - Alice Zerr Lamberger ‘84

“When I walked around the seemingly endless rows of RVs, tents, fire pits, and the famous Budget truck, all I saw and felt was a camaraderie of friends who were laughing, loving and sharing. Everything I loved about being a Puma was palpable on that Saturday evening in the Alumni Village.” - Sara Freiburger Phillips ‘95



Above: Pumas join together in the chapel for mass during Little 500 weekend. Photo courtesy of Karen Adkins.



Below: Alumni reunite in Alumni Village. Photo courtesy of Pat Nowak.

“While at the Grotto Sunday before church I ran across about five other alums (1984 or so was the oldest not sure on youngest though) and one lady said, ‘I am hugging all Pumas today’ and soon after all of shared in crying as SJC is special to all of us.” - Mike Monahan ‘89



Above: Sphomore Nathan Stroup (second from the left) poses with his pit crew. Photo courtesy of Nathan Stroup.

Left: Alumni bond with the current occupants of their old dorm room in Bennett Hall. Photo courtesy of Richard Highberger.

“ My favorite memory was being able to reconnect with friends and family that were made throughout my time at SJC.” - Julie Hays ‘14

Closing Remarks

By Kris Sakelararis ‘82
Guest Writer

Below is the speech given at the 50th annual and final Senior of the Year dinner that took place on Friday, April 21, 2017. By request, The Observer is reprinting this speech as it captures the feelings of many concerning what it means to be a Puma during this time.

For fourteen years I have had the privilege of presenting the Senior of the Year award at this dinner. My speech has evolved over the years, but my theme of “coming full circle” has remained the same. In contemplating my words tonight, I wrestled with what I could say that would capture all the feelings that have reverberated through the campus and the Puma family these past 3 months.

The word that kept coming to my mind was “bittersweet.” “Bittersweet” best captures the feeling of pain and pleasure that I suspect you are all feeling. But tonight and moving forward, I challenge each of you to concentrate on the “sweet” and join me in trying to leave the

“bitter” behind. The first day that each of you set foot on this campus you became a PUMA. In a couple of weeks you will leave this campus for the last time, but if you take nothing else away from my remarks tonight, please believe that these buildings and this campus, while they hold great and powerful memories, they are not what made you a Puma. Saint Joseph’s College and being a Puma is not just about a place in Rennselaer, Indiana. No, it is more about a special connection to each other, a feeling of closeness not only to each other, but to faculty, staff and alumni; it is about being a part of huge extended family. These ties and relationships that were formed and cultivated here are what will continue to bind us moving forward.

I know it is hard not to be bitter and angry about the fact that our “home” will no longer exist as we know it, but our “Puma Family” is still very much alive and strong, and moving forward I hope each of you will join me in staying “Involved for Life.”

“It’s different when you meet up with your SJC friends off campus. Being together again, back at the Joe was an experience I’ll never forget. It was so wonderful to experience it together. The mass on Sunday was absolutely beautiful, and it was wonderful to celebrate mass one last time there for me. Also, surprising John Rahe in the theater was definitely one of the highlights of the trip, as well as seeing faculty who have become more than just teachers, but mentors and friends over the years.” - Jen White (Zak) ‘04

“We were part of the luminary launch at 10pm and the cheers that went up were heartwarming!” - Audra Hershberger

A Note from the Editors

Working on The Observer these last four years as both reporters and Co-Editors-in-Chiefs has been an honor and a privilege. We have enjoyed serving the Saint Joseph’s College community by continuing a tradition, offering a space for intellectual freedom and the opportunity for students to cultivate their writing and journalistic skills. As seniors, we knew this would be our last issue, but we never imagined that it would be the last issue. Those late Sunday nights, last-minute scrambles for quotes, photo problems, but then finally distributing those finished publications are memories that we will always cherish from our time here at “The Joe.” We hope that this is not the end of The Observer, but simply a hiatus.

We want to thank all of the contributors, editors, and readers of The Observer (formerly Stuff), past and present, for their dedication to this publication which will always be a part of SJC history. We have all left our mark. We would also like to thank our faculty advisor, Dr. Charles Kerlin, for all of his hard work and support over the years. We could not have done it without you. Finally, we would like to thank the entire Puma family for their outpouring of love during this time. Despite all the uncertainty we’ve experienced in these last three months, one thing remained certain: Pumas support each other. On behalf of The Observer, thank you all.

We intend for this final issue to be a celebration of the Saint Joe spirit. We are proud to be members of this incredible Puma family and will be involved for life.

-Alyssa Cook and Kylie Hill ‘17

Once A Puma, Always A Puma

Karen Gramajo

Class of 2017

“My favorite Saint Joe memory is presenting art-work in the Core foyer.”

Jim Sacco

Class of 1997

“The reason I’ve been in the journalism business for 20 years is simple: Saint Joe’s and *The Observer*.”

Aidan Osman

Class of 2017

“Party like a Puma!”

Carlos Branson

Class of 2018

“The greatest gift of life is friendship and that’s what I got at Saint Joe.”

Sarah Bromberek

Class of 2017

“SJC has shaped me into the young adult I am. There are too many good memories to choose from. I will always cherish the times I’ve had with my fellow Pumas and my professors. Forever a Puma!”

Cameron Adams

Class of 2019

“I love Saint Joe and I will never forget the friends and family I gained here.”

Amanda Duncan

Class of 2015

“My favorite thing about being a Puma is that we are all part of this amazing community, an SJC family. Saint Joe will always be a second home to me because it’s where I made countless memories and friendships that will last a lifetime.”

Greg Cleaver

Class of 1998

“To the class of 2017, I know how bittersweet the next few weeks are going to be, especially with all the added stuff you have had to deal with the last three months. I would just like to let you know that all the alumni are praying for you. I do have one request for all you: enjoy graduation weekend. You, your parents, family, and professors have put a lot of time and effort into the weekend. I know it is bittersweet but do what you can to enjoy it.... IT IS YOUR WEEKEND.

“To the underclassmen, faculty and staff, I

say thank you. I could not imagine what the last three months have been like, but like true Pumas you continued teaching, learning, playing sports, acting, and performing. I would like to say you are also in our prayers and thoughts as the school year comes to the end. I also would like to let you know if you need anything no matter where you are a Puma will be there to help. How do I know this? It is because this past weekend I was in a Budget truck talking with alumni from Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, Ohio, Wisconsin, Florida, and even yes, Hawaii. So yes, Pumas are everywhere. #involved-forlife”

Jamie Riberto Makuc

Class of 1999

“Saint Joe allowed me to get involved in so many activities and really develop as a person. I loved writing for *The Observer* and serving as the sports editor.”

Samuel Heasty

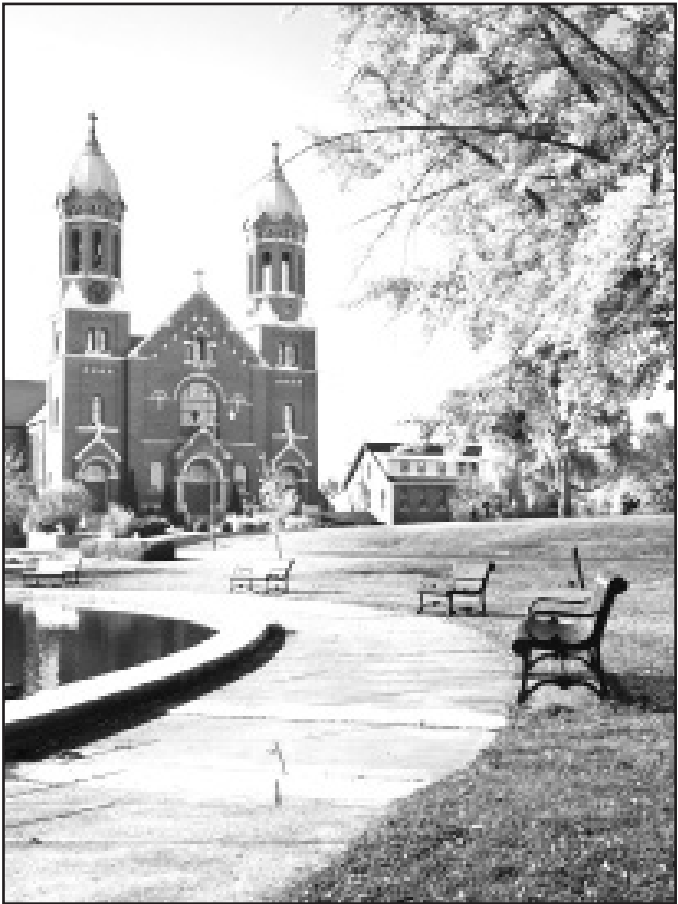
Class of 2018

“All last year my whole hall was like family coming in and out of each other’s rooms, all day making friends.”



Above: Lake Banet.

Photo courtesy of Institutional Advancement.



Above: Saint Joseph’s College chapel.

Photo courtesy of Institutional Advancement.

Lauren Grasham

Class of 2019

“SJC has become my second home, and I’m very thankful for everyone that I’ve met here. I’ve made friends I know I’ll have for a lifetime, and I’ve made countless memories with them that helped me grow as a person and made my life just that much better. I’m very happy with my decision to come to Saint Joe, despite everything thats happened.

By Matthew Heaney

Class of 1980

“I could send 1,000 beer memory stories but I thought I would do a clean memory. What I loved most about Saint Joe’s that a lot of students did not take advantage of was Lake Banet. We had a solid group from Gallagher Hall that would go to Lake Banet all the time. In the warm weather, at the start of the year, we would going swimming at the lake. After a nice swim we would toss the Frisbee for hours in the open field behind the pavilion. In the fall and winter we would have great bonfires inside one of the covey holes so security would not see us. The fires would always be a great start for weekend activities or just something to do to get out of the dorm room. When Spring

time came back around we would throw a frisbee in the field and maybe a few of us would dare the cold and swim in the lake.

For the past 16 years the same core group minus a few people meet together in Monticello every year for Disc Golf and Links golf outing. Our trip always includes a day trip to Saint Joe’s to go to the lake for a nice relaxing swim and a few beers lakeside and of course a wagon or two at Southside. The people at Saint Joe’s always treated us like kings when we arrived for our annual get together. A few times they let us stay on campus in one of the dorm rooms. We will miss coming back as it was always one of the highlights of our trip.”

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● *The Observer* would like to recognize all of the past and present contributors of both *Stuff* and *The Observer*. Each and every one of you have helped perserve the intellectual freedom at Saint Joseph’s College and will forever be a part of SJC history.

We would like to especailly recognize the contributors to Vol 83 for continueing to write articles during this stressful time as well representing *The Observer* and writing with integrity.

● Faculty Facilitator

Dr. Charles M. Kerlin

We, the newspaper staff of *The Observer*, while exercising our First Amendment rights to freedom of speech, promise to adhere to the highest journalistic standards. *The Observer* will not print articles, editorials, or other material that misquote or misrepresent members or organizations within the Saint Joseph’s College community. While constantly striving to meet these goals, we can and will print retractions amending or remedying any problems brought to our attention.

Reflections on the Core Program

By Dr. Michael Nichols
Guest Writer

Gilgamesh, an all-time favorite Core reading, opens with the title character surveying the walls of his city, Uruk, remarking on their fine details, the precious materials of which they are made, and the expert handiwork of their composition. At the end of the epic, he gives the same description, but in between he has journeyed far, suffered much, and failed in his quest to achieve immortality. Though the words are the same, we are left with the distinct impression that Gilgamesh sees the walls very differently at the end.

As we face the end of so many things at Saint Joseph’s College, Gilgamesh’s struggle to face his inevitable death, and ultimately his change in perception, have been on my mind a great deal. Particularly, as a former student, then a professor, then a director, and now the coordinator of the program, my thoughts always return to Core. With the closure of the College in May, we may see the last ever Core classes and lectures take place. The Core Curriculum has been Saint Joseph’s signature academic program for forty-eight years. Though other institutions often have general education programs called something like “Core,” elements of our program are unique to Saint Joseph’s and can be found at no other school in the nation. None. It is worthwhile to let the gravity of that statement sink in.

The origins of the program can be traced to the Second Vatican Council, held in 1962, which, among many other reforms, prompted a reassessment of Catholic Higher Education. Fr. Charles Banet, the president of Saint Joseph’s at the time, challenged the faculty to develop a curriculum responsive to the Council’s call for distinctive programs in liberal education. A team developed the program over several years, with the courses implemented semester-by-semester, starting in 1969. Though there have been changes in its structure, the program has had consistent components, namely a series of courses covering the present socio-historical situation and its roots in Western history, followed by intercultural studies and scientific modes of inquiry, leading up to a capstone in which students articulate their own worldview in conversation with Christian Humanist principles. This structure and goal finds physical form in the brick sculpture “Transformations” located on the wall outside Shen auditorium. In that work, the cosmic symbols of Alpha and Omega and liturgical symbols of the chalice and bread intermingle with the seven symbols of the Liberal Arts (such as the balance for Logic and lyre for Music). Uniting them all is the central figure of the Cross, showing the symbiotic connection between academic and spiritual pursuits in Core. This Core sculpture is an artistic representation of the College’s Mission to train

students simultaneously in professional skills and Gospel values. The impact of this program on the institution is difficult to overestimate. At other schools, the general education model is often “cafeteria style” – students spend their first three or four semesters taking a series of unconnected courses to check off boxes of requirements corresponding to separate disciplines. Core broke that mold in every conceivable way. Instead of random courses confined to a student’s early career, Core was designed to be a single program to run throughout every Saint Joe student’s college experience, unite the disciplines, and build to a conclusion that works in parallel and resonance with the major. To have any one of these dynamics at an institution would be considered innovative and cutting edge; to have all three is unheard of and simply nonexistent at any other college or university in the country. Yet – and certainly we can (and have) continually debated its effectiveness – it has been the overarching goal of Core to create a holistic, common academic experience for all students that helps them think deeply and critically about their values. To put it simply, Core was the manifestation of the belief that education and values are best considered together, as a community.

As a result, the program brought together students of all backgrounds and majors, forging a shared community. Faculty of all backgrounds and disciplines were brought together in this way, too, collaborating across departmental lines to create and instruct Core courses. In those planning meetings, you might have found, sitting around the same table, professors of Political Science, Theater, Biology, History, and Religion talking about how best to cover Dante’s *Inferno*. On another occasion, you might have found professors of Chemistry, Forensic Science, Philosophy, and English discussing how to create cultural change projects and cover the central pillars of sustainability. Through Core, our faculty became experts at something that other institutions would kill for. In fact, we became so good at it that (I would argue) we took it for granted: we talked to and learned from one another.

At my previous institutions – Northwestern University (a big school), Miami University (a medium school), and Ripon College (a small, Liberal Arts school) – regardless of the respective size or ethos of the place, faculty reacted identically when I described Saint Joseph’s Core Program: their jaws dropped, their eyes widened, and they gasped, “We could never pull that off here.” What they meant was that this kind of universal academic endeavor, marshalling members across a community and methods of thought across fields, is unparalleled at institutions

across the country. It takes faculty committed to selfless teamwork, interdisciplinary compromise, and tireless collaboration to initiate and sustain such a program. Because of these demands on faculty, as well as trends toward specialization in higher education, we may never see its like again.

And it has made a difference in the lives of students. Recent alumni describe the impact of Core on their lives in various ways. Matt Hess (a 2014 graduate in Religion/Philosophy) told me that, “today, I am a better reader, writer, and presenter because these skills were developed throughout the Core Program.” Doug Baker (2015 graduate in Physical Education) says, “Core prepared me for the business world by helping me gain the ability to form an opinion, debate effectively, and make decisions ethically.” Jennie Weer (2016 graduate in Mass Communications) especially valued discussions with classmates: “Whether it was religious or political views and/or opinions, I not only learned what people of different backgrounds believed, but was able to hear firsthand in class from my peers why they think the way that they do.” Other students would obviously comment in other ways, both positively and perhaps negatively. However, when Core “clicked” for students, it changed lives.

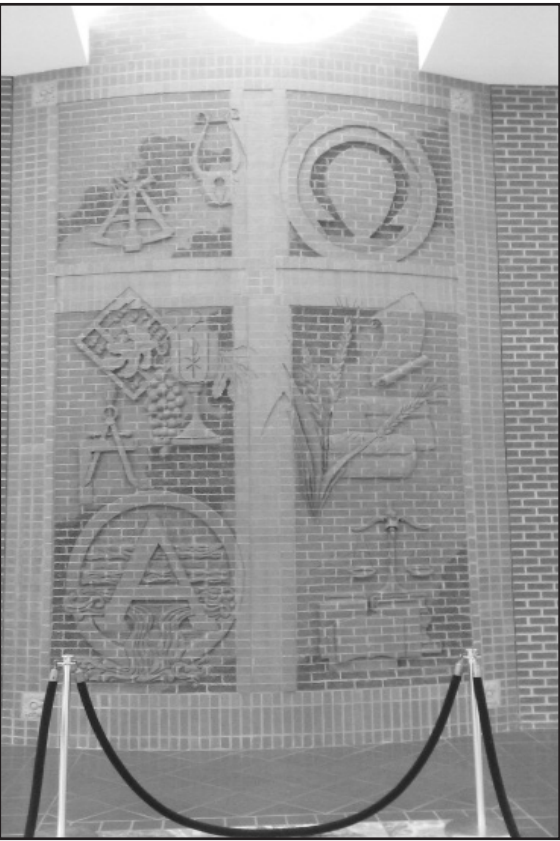
At its best, then, Core was truly a community experience. To share a favorite memory of mine, years ago during a Core 3 discussion on Oedipus, a generally quiet student took advantage of a pause in the conversation to note that Oedipus, by being caught in forces beyond his control, is in a similar spot to Odysseus, who is kept away from home by the gods, and also Gilgamesh, who cannot save his friend Enkidu from the fate of death. She then asked, “Does that mean that life is basically out of our control?” There was silence. Not the silence of students avoiding discussion. This was the silence of thinking, with all eyes locked on one another. One student responded to her. Then another responded to him, and another jumped in, and another, and so on. I stood back, smiling, and watched them go – majors in Psychology, Education, Exercise Science, Philosophy, Political Science, and Biology – becoming one community, seekers after the truth.

Core brought these students of different backgrounds and interests together, just as it has brought together faculty from Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Business, Humanities, and Education. Under one curricular roof, it placed Ta Nehisi Coates, John Locke, Plato, Dante, Neils Bohr, Charles Darwin, Pope Francis’ *Laudato Si*, the Bhagavad Gita, Gabriel Marcia Marquez, and the Gospels of the New Testament. Meeting that academic challenge, which most institutions would not even consider taking up, is a considerable achievement.

It is no small wonder then, that throughout its existence Core has been lavished with national recognition, awards, and millions upon millions of dollars of grants from such prestigious organizations as the American Association of Colleges and Universities, the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, the Association for General and Liberal Studies, the Lilly Endowment, and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

To accomplish these feats took extraordinary leadership and during its history, Core has been fortunate to have had several distinguished faculty serve as its Coordinator. From earliest to most recent, those Coordinators have been Fr. William Kramer (1968-73), John Nichols (1973-96), Fr. Tim McFarland (1996-2009), Mike Malone (2009-13), and Fr. Bill Stang (2013-16). In May 2016, I was honored when Vice President Pulver appointed me as the current Core Coordinator. As no program is perfect, and we would never claim Core to be, we had several plans for renewing and refreshing the curriculum content and our faculty’s approach. It was work that we were excited to do. As an alumnus, the intellectual blueprint of my brain was set by the interdisciplinary approach of Core. Beyond the intellectual connection, as is obvious from the list of past coordinators, there is also the genetic component: Core is a part of my family’s work, its heritage. Having personally seen the last Core lecture in the Science auditorium, the community coming together in 1995 to dedicate the Core building, and the excitement of the inaugural lecture in Shen, it is difficult to face the prospect that an historic and unique program, central to the mission and identity of the College, has an uncertain future. I was thrilled to be the next Core Coordinator. I did not anticipate possibly being the last.

Just as those Core 3 students debated in the classroom, we are left with the issue of how life spins out of control, although in a much more concrete rather than theoretical setting. Like those students, though, we can draw on Core to construct a way forward. As I described at the beginning, Gilgamesh has always been a favorite reading in Core and I think we can learn much from his changing appreciation of his city’s greatest achievement: its ornate walls. In his first view, corresponding to his arrogant



Above: The brickwork art in the Core lobby titled “Transformations”. The work visualizes the mission of the Core program and Saint Joseph’s College. Photo courtesy of James Kile.

mentality, the walls represent a display of wealth, imposing authority, and power. By the end of the epic, Gilgamesh has realized his flaws and faced his mortality. When he returns to Uruk, his perception reflects his new outlook: the walls are now an ode to the beautiful frailty of human achievement, of building and persisting at dreams despite knowing they cannot last. Like him, the walls will become dust, but Gilgamesh realizes that what they stand for will live on.

Now, when I see the Core brick sculpture in the foyer, I think of the walls of Uruk, of what communities can build together, of how they make themselves unique, and of the ultimate fragility of dreams. In a pamphlet on the sculpture, John Nichols wrote, “As long as this brick sculpture Transformations lasts, it is the hope of those who designed it and raised the funds for it that faculty and students in Core will be reminded of and inspired by the truth and beauty of the Christian Humanist vision.” For forty-eight years, those working in Core have furthered that vision and even if the physical bricks of the sculpture and the existence of the program itself have an uncertain future, just like the walls of Uruk the Mission they represent goes beyond those concrete manifestations. This program has transformed the Saint Joseph’s community, its faculty, and thousands of students. No matter what the future may hold, the faculty who designed Core created something brilliant. Thank you to the Program’s founders, Coordinators, Directors, and dedicated faculty. We made a difference. We did some good in the world. No matter what, that will live on.

An Historical Memoir

By Fr. Bill Stang
Guest Writer

My connection to Saint Joseph’s College formally began in 1950 when I was born here. My dad was taking an English Final Exam at the time mom was delivering me at the old Jasper County Hospital (it later became the site of the county jail and is now a vacant lot). The C.P.P.S. priests and brothers back then did not let you out of a test for something as typical as your wife having a baby. The C.P.P.S. are the College’s founding Religious order, known as the Missionaries of the Precious Blood. When I was a month old, Dad graduated from SJC and had his picture taken with my mom, my older brother and me wrapped in swaddling clothes. It was on the steps of the old Administration Building. Later, Dad had the College muralist include the photo in the mural of SJC history that runs around the ballroom. It is on a dorm bulletin board if you desire to search.

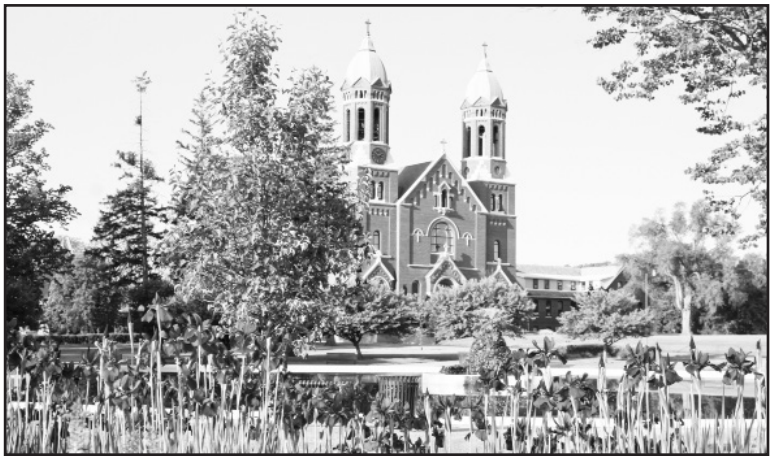
Mom and Dad pulled up roots when I was six months old and moved to Dayton, Ohio to find work, which is where the rest of the family was born. Three of us ended up as alums of SJC. Dad returned regularly to SJC as a member and then president of the SJC Alumni Association, and my first real memories of the College go back to those days. I can still picture him driving north on 231 while my brothers and I try to be the first to spot the twin towers of the Chapel. I often “won” because I learned to look for the water tower first (it’s taller). The trip took a lot longer back then since I-65 did not exist, and we were very excited to sight the symbol of our journey’s end.

My memories of Saint Joe’s always bounce back and forth between the place and the people. While dad was in meetings, one of the C.P.P.S. priests kept us company as we skipped around the fountain or explored the old buildings. They kept us from crawling through the tunnel system, but there were still plenty of passages and stairways to explore, especially in the science and administration buildings. In a rainstorm you could find cover in underground passages from what is now McHale to then Gaspar Hall, and with a quick dash enter the science building to the stairs leading up to the theater and many more passages. I quickly came to appreciate the sense of service found in the C.P.P.S. priests and brothers. A C.P.P.S. priest kept watch at the hospital while my mom delivered me to the waiting world. I also was named after both the College and one of our priests who’d helped my dad, thus becoming William Joseph. And there we were with them taking time from their busy day to watch over the pesky kids of an alum seeking to help the College.

When I came back to Saint Joseph’s as a student, I was once again captured by the people and the place. At that time, SJC was bursting at the seams with over

1,400 students. Students lived in the Powerhouse, Administration Building, McHale (then Xavier), Aquinas, Drexel, Dwenger, Gaspar, two houses west of campus (Scharf House and White House), and a large house in town (Washburn), as well as in the current dorms. At the start of the school year students sometimes had to be housed in dorm lounges until homesickness or bad behavior created room vacancies.

As a student, I found plenty to do on campus. Besides classes, which went Monday to Saturday, intramural sports went non-stop through the semesters, even though we did not have the rec center. Three simultaneous IM basketball or volleyball games would fit (barely) in the backcourt area of the gym with games a mere yard apart, stray balls and players often becoming a brief part of adjoining contests. Softball and football took place where the apartments now sit, as well as on the land now occupied by the Core building. A men’s dorm could have 2-4 IM basketball, football, floor hockey, or softball teams in the season.



Above: The twin towers of the Chapel that lets Pumas know that we are home. Photo courtesy of Father Tim McFarland

There were about 20 clubs as well as the Student Association, which was very good at getting top rated performers who would stop for a quick gig at SJC before heading up to the big venues in Chicago. There was usually an SA sponsored “Mixer” on the weekends. This built very strong dorm and club identities in SJC students, which you can still hear when the older alumni come back to SJC at homecoming and share memories of IM games, club trips, and mixers. This constant interaction with classmates gave me and many others a great education about the rules of life and who we were as a people. TV was difficult because there was no cable, just an antenna, and so you joined your dorm mates in the lounge and fought over which program you watched on the dorm’s lone TV. There were only three grainy channels out of the Chicago to choose from anyway. Since the Bears had their preseason training at SJC it was pretty well settled that we watched their games.

When the weather was nice, there was a choice of impromptu frisbee, football, softball, and sunbather watching during the day. If there was a wet snowfall, a group of men in one of the dorms often formed up and began a massive, nighttime snowball fight, which swept up hundreds of students and raged campus

wide before it wound to an end. In the winter we also often had a month or two for ice-skating and hockey. The College kept a small water flow in the fountain that let the pond freeze without bursting the cement walls. We’d shovel off the snow and it was usually pretty good for ice-skating in January and February.

Quite a few changes took place in my four years here between 1968 and 1972. We became fully co-ed and women moved into Justin as residential students. That meant the SA could stop bussing ladies in for dances and the men in town stopped driving onto campus to find their “stolen” girlfriends. More and more of our professors were laymen and women, and I was impressed that they were just as dedicated as our C.P.P.S. priests and brothers. Dr. Andrew Mehall fostered my love of Biology, and my love of classical music was born in Anne-Marie Egan’s music appreciation class. Dr. John Nichols tried unsuccessfully to instill a sense of philosophy inside me, but he succeeded nicely with my brother Mike. I was in the last class that

did not have Core, and my brother was in the first class to take Core. This let me compare notes and see how much more Core offered compared to my series of “Introductory 101” courses. I later found out how much work and creativity that took on the part of our faculty. The completion of I-65 around 1971 led to more and more students going home on weekends. Cable TV arrived a few years later and the number of students interested in intramural sports declined as people did more in their rooms. These were trends we never were able to reverse, and weekend and after-class time more and more became small group or private events.

When I returned five years later to teach, the Administration Building was gone (it burned down in 1973 and now is a grass lot in front of our chapel), and our student numbers had declined to the point where we closed or sold the houses and moved all of the students into the current dorms. I returned to SJC as a teacher in 1977 to find the College cramped for space despite the decrease in enrollment. This was due to the loss of the massive Administration Building with its faculty offices and classrooms. Just about every spare space, including large closets, was being used as an office or classroom. My office was a storeroom, which

I expanded by sealing off the end of another storeroom and opening a sealed doorway.

It was only on my return as a teacher that I realized that our Precious Blood religious men and women at SJC had been working, often at several jobs, for a small financial stipend called “contributed service.” In my fifth year teaching at SJC in 1983, I was teaching full-time, coaching soccer, doing weekend masses, and was Priest in Residence in Noll Hall. My stipend was \$2,500 for the year plus room and board. Some of our C.P.P.S. made even less. Lower payment to religious clergy kept costs lower so tuition could be affordable for our students. The 70s and 80s, sadly, were the years of major decline in the numbers of C.P.P.S. religious clergy. Each C.P.P.S. departure often meant hiring two laypersons needing full salaries rather than stipends. Costs were also driven up by increased government regulations and students’ desires for improved living spaces. Rising costs led to tuition increases, which led to further decline in enrollment. The faculty and administration decided to “grow” the College and the Trustees agreed. We brought in additional sports including softball and men/women’s soccer. In a relatively short time we built the Core building, Hansen recreation center, and the apartments. To pay for this we would need 300 freshmen each year. Sadly, this was a number we never reached.

One of the many good things that happened for me at Saint Joseph’s College was being able to support student efforts and watch them blossom. One was Soccer at our College. While I was a student, I joined the newly formed SJC Soccer Club. At that time there was no organized soccer in Northwest Indiana. I can say that I was a “filler” at best, but soccer was underway and was at SJC to stay. The SJC Soccer Club truly blossomed under the leadership of Ed Nieberding, but I missed his, and the Club’s glory years. On my return to SJC as a teacher, Fr. Jim Froelich asked me to become the faculty sponsor of the club. The players made a commitment to me that they would represent SJC well and faithfully, and I committed to seeking varsity status for the club. We achieved varsity status when the faculty approved it in 1980. The team grew and improved in the typical SJC way, through the commitment of players and SJC personnel like Earnest Watson who coached the team through several crucial years, and Mike Minielli, a former SJC player who went on to become Head Coach and start our Varsity Women’s Soccer Team. Another SJC player, Sandro Bassanini started Rensselaer’s youth soccer program.

Another student success story is the Gallagher Charitable Society. A group of Gallagher Hall students, in 1977, got the idea of raising money for the Jerry Lewis Muscular Dystrophy telethon. They raised \$300 for

the telethon. That success led to “Operation Christmas Basket” to provide a Christmas basket for the poor in Jasper County. Fund raising included a floor hockey marathon and raised \$1,500. The next year, the Gallagher students turned it into an annual Christmas party for the poor children in Jasper County. Every year, without a miss, the students of Saint Joseph’s College have helped the poor families of Jasper County to have a Christmas celebration. I became the Club’s faculty sponsor in 1988 and have enjoyed their efforts every year since then, except for when I was deployed overseas. Though it is student run, many faculty and staffed have joined with the students and aided the expansion of their effort. One example is the involvement of the Rensselaer Rotary Club under the guidance of Mindy Beier and Ari Nelson. Through their efforts and fundraising, every child now receives a new coat, hat and gloves. Another marvelous contribution came from the SJC baseball team under Head Coach Rick O’Dette. The baseball team plus the women’s softball team now form the backbone of the organization. Coach O’Dette and his team have provided continuity, fundraising, planning and leadership, and make the event itself run like a well-oiled machine. Both Rick O’Dette and Mindy Beier are SJC alumni who participated in Gallagher Charitable as students. They show us how we “pay it forward”. The club has received the Jerry Lewis Muscular Dystrophy Association Award (1990) and the “Outstanding Public Service” award from the Indiana Conference of Higher Education. The greatest award, though, has always been the pride students feel from the smiles on the faces of the children they served.

There is so much more that I could say, but these examples serve well to explain why I am so grateful for having had the chance to serve here at Saint Joseph’s College with so many good people. May we now take our sense of service in Christ to all corners of the world.

The Observer Staff would like to thank Father Stang for writing his piece “A Historical Memior” for the finial issue of The Observer:

We would also like to thank you for all the work you have done for the academic and spiritual education for every SJC student, as well as the immense amount of charity work you have done for our town, Rensselear. Thank you for your service to our country and your service to God.

Thank you to Dr. Michael Nichols for your piece “Reflections on Core” and your contributions to the Core Program. Your lectures, classes, conversations, and dedication to The College have had a large impact on every Puma you have met.

Saint Joseph’s College wouldn’t be the same without Father Stang and Dr. Nichols
- *The Observer Staff*

sports

Puma Spotlight

By Hannah Wallace
Sports Editor

In August of 1889, a small school in Rensselaer, IN was established as Saint Joseph's College - and if you're reading this right now, chances are this small town became your home. When us Pumas were recruited to little old Rensselaer, maybe we had no idea what to expect. I sure know I didn't. This was college; we were 18, we were young, reckless, excited, nervous, but maybe most importantly, all just trying to make it through and find ourselves in what would soon be

four unforgettable years. While SJC may be small, the impact that it's left on everyone has grown to be something bigger than all of us. Our teammates became our family, our coaches became our heroes, and our games, races, matches, practices, etc., became something that we, although at times may have hated, learned to love. There's nothing quite like waking up at 6:00AM for morning workouts and seeing the sun rise up over the reflecting pond in front of the chapel. There's something about it that feels like home.

As athletes, we win and we

lose. We have games we wish would have never happened and we have that one game, one race, or one match that we wish could last forever. But what I've begun to realize now, more than ever, is that maybe it's not the game that we want to last, maybe it's not that feeling during the win or seeing exactly what we want on the scoreboard, but rather, it's how we played and who we played with. Those games will forever be memories; moments we'll hold up in time, just as Saint Joseph's College is our campus, our home, that we want to always come back to. And while

I know that a concrete, existing place is more comforting than a memory, SJC represents more than that. Saint Joseph's College is everything it is not because it's in Rensselaer, IN, not because the fountain only turns on half the time and we never have hot water, and not because the buildings are that familiar red and brown brick.

SJC is what it is because of us. Because of us who have traveled here and made this place our home. Without us, these buildings would just be buildings, but instead, they hold infinite memories and unforgettably, irreplaceable moments. And

while we may all be leaving in May and can no longer bring anyone to SJC, I suppose that now it is our time to bring SJC to them; to whomever "they" may be and to wherever our journeys take us. Perhaps, we take the players, take our teammates, our coaches, and bring that game to them. And it won't matter about the scoreboard. It won't matter what teams we may play up against next and it won't matter that our jerseys are no longer red and purple. What matters is that SJC is where they all began. And as always, once a Puma, always a Puma.

Laura Witek-Jones Cross Country, 1984



"Fondest memory choreographing to the school song and coming back years later and seeing the team not only had grown in size but still doing my dance to the school Song! Loved seeing something I created caring over,"

- Bobbie Silvas, 2005

Missy (Kiefer) Ewbank Tennis, 2008



"Clinching the Lewis match to get us into conference my senior year with a great team and great friend for Puma Tennis"

Brandon Hardy, 2002

"Loved all of his teammates and friends," lived on by Shawn Hardy, 2011

Getting my nickname from Rob Amodio. The friendships that are timeless, ageless and priceless from Puma Football."
-Michael DeYoung, 1989

"I love all the friendships I've made from Puma Basketball."
- Karissa Laurinas Losh, 2002

Liz Anderson Synder Soccer, 1997



Favorite memories are going to Hilton Head for spring break and having friendships that are still strong to this day!"

- Marie Kegley, 2014

- Natalie Burgeson, 2012

"Friendships, memories and road trips on the Puma Softball team"

- Kimberly (Hamel) Trennepohl, 2002

-Jill McLachlan Branham, 2000

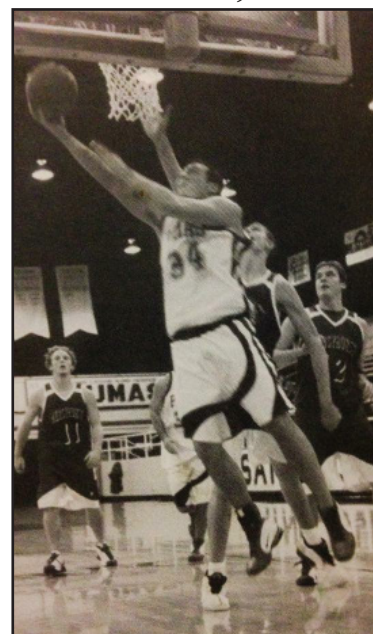
Jamie Doerger Rickett Soccer, 1992



Friends for life - Trish Fledderjohn Reidenbach, Jennifer Williams, Jennifer Bajdo, Carolyn Seng, Sarah Engelgau pictured at Homecoming 2016.

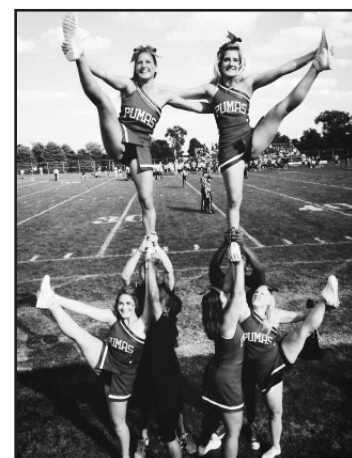
"Soccer memory - beating Lewis 7-0 senior year (final four season) and track memory" - Bill Bell Jr doing his Forrest Gump Puma track story.

Corey Seegers Basketball, 2004



"My first favorite memory from being a Puma athlete came in the summer of 2001 when I was looking to transfer from Division 1 Morehead State University. I will never forget coming to campus for the first time and meeting not only the guys that would become my future teammates and my friends, but the group of guys that would become my brothers. The people I met on my visit that day are the reason I chose to transfer to St. Joe and it's a decision that I will always cherish as one of the greatest decisions of my life."

"Basketball and golf, beating Evansville at Evansville was unforgettable for our basketball team."
- Stephen Scharf, 1969



I loved every minute of spending my Saturdays cheering on the Pumas! I've made life long friends with my teammates, players and the fans!" -Alexis Rogers, 2014

"Peanut butter jelly time!"
-Tina Deno Vancel, 2003

"My Favorite memories are making it to the conference tournament my sophomore year and playing tennis with some of my best friends,"
- Jessica Conlin, 2009

"Making it to conference tournament my freshman year and being able to create great memories with friends, Jordan Orner and Neesh Neesh!"
- Erica Bengel, 2010

Stephenie Jaworski Softball, 2011



"My favorite memory was hitting my first career homerun. Also, I'm so happy to look back on so many great memories I made with some amazing women during that time."

"All of the great teammates I was able to play football with at St. Joe's."
-Dennis Strobel, 1971

Puma Spotlight

By Hannah Wallace
Sports Editor

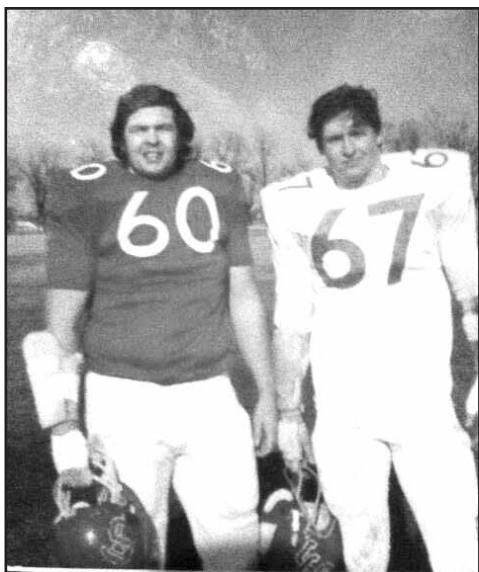
“For me, my whole career was my highlight because of all the wonderful coaches and teammates I encountered in both football and baseball. Just a fantastic time of my life. Thanks SJC.” - Patrick J. Gora, 1968

Ashley Marconi
Cross Country, 2008



“Running, by definition, is not an easy sport. However, my teammates made it the best part of my college career. Some of the best memories I have at St. Joe revolve around track and cross country. These girls continue to be some of my best friends even from different parts of the country. We will always be proud to be Pumas!”

Dana Stewart
Football, 1973



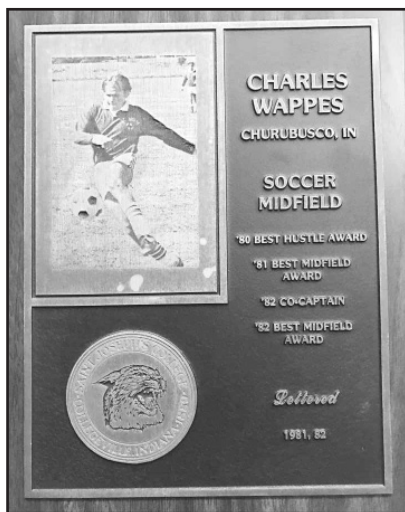
“A very fond memory was playing against my brother Dale ‘68 and cousin Duffy Hagist ‘66 in the old timers game. As a ‘73 grad and football player, I will always remember winning the ICC Championship in 1971.”

Mary Mauro
Softball, 1999



“I only attended 1 year and played softball (I decided to get married and move to another state) I kept in touch with a few girls on the team. I loved my freshman year at St. Joe and it holds a dear spot in my heart. I still keep in contact with many of my friends and I actually personally traveled to Florida with the team two years after that just to support and cheer them on.”

Charles Wappes
Soccer, 1982



Best memory: Playing at Notre Dame, on the artificial turf, under the lights! I had sprained both ankles in the two weeks before. I had both ankles heavily taped and wore green high top Chuck Taylors that I borrowed from Jack Emerson. My family was at the game, there was no way I wasn't participating!!

Laura Furrer
Basketball & Track, 2016



My favorite/most memorable memories would be when we travelled to Missouri every year over Christmas break for our 2 games. Every year we always seemed to get stuck in “Misery” (Missouri). One year in particular, we left on Wednesday and didn't get back until Tuesday. Illinois was in a state of emergency so we were stuck in Missouri. Then we were able to enter Illinois but then Indiana was in a state of emergency. So we had to stay at a couple different hotels to get closer to campus each day. We were with the men's basketball team as well, so we were able to play games together and just hang out and get closer as a team. Oh, and we were able to not practice too, so that is always a plus!

Joseph J. Schipsi
Soccer, 1984



Soccer is the epitome of a team sport. The entire team and head coach Father Stang should be recognized. All of us shared stories of our struggles and Father Stang's efforts to become a varsity team. Spring of 1980, still a senior in high school, I visited SJC on a weekend east coast bus trip. I had the chance to meet Father Stang and play a little pick up soccer with the then club team. When I was told that they will be a varsity team in September that's when I sold on going to SJ. SJC had everything I wanted; soccer team, radio station, small catholic college.

“Bus rides back from meets and long chats with friends... friendships with teammates to this day.” - Kim (Woodruff) Schmid, 2008, Brant Schmid, 2006

Amy (Creager) Cumberland
Softball, 2001



“One of my favorite memories is the year we took the ‘Puma Shuttle’ to Florida to play ball. April 22, 2017 - I made a new favorite memory when a group of Alumni Softball players got to take the field one last time together for old times sake.”

Sarah Merkel
Soccer & Track, 2013



“I played both soccer and ran track and field at Saint Joe all four years. I graduated in 2013. There were many fond memories I formed while at Saint Joe. My favorite memory would be all of the road trips I went on with my teammates and the new friendships I made while here. Most importantly, I was so happy to have had the opportunity to compete alongside my older sister, Jenny, for two years in both soccer and track.”

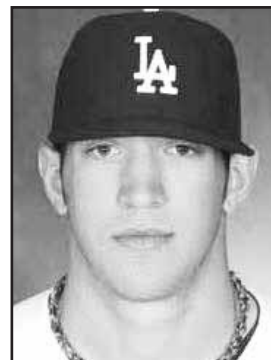
“Coach Massoels and his distinct yell. To this day I go back for track meets, I hear that, I still look his direction and know exactly where he's standing.” - Wes Murray, 2006

“I still hear Massoels voice (yell) while on runs... 20 years later haha!” - Liz Anderson Synder, 1997

Gavin Voss
Football, 2016



“Best memory: Kicking the winning field goal in overtime my freshman year against Quincy University. After the kick, I will never forget that moment!!! Thank you Puma Football players and coaches for a great 4 years!!!”



Michael Pericht
Baseball, 2009

“Best memories were hosting the 2008 regionals and having the campus to ourselves during our playoff run.”

Creative Corner

Saint Joseph’s College

By: Karen Gramajo ‘17

I wanted to say goodbye.
The years started to fly.
I yearned to stop the time,
To see every smile chime.

I wanted to say, hello.
It means, “I love you.”
It’s sad to say good-bye-
Too much to do, I cry.

I tell you my observations;
You smile fondly.
I squeal for small things.
You ponder why I sing.

I’ll tell you, everyone:
I love the time as one
Enjoying your reaction,
Loving your passion.

I’m going to miss you,
Pupils of Saint Joe.
Life goes on it seems,
But memories remain.

I pray I become a legend.

Art at SJC ...

“The Art Department at SJC allowed me to find my passion. Without it I would be lost.” - Charles Morrison

“The Art Department is a loud and crazy group. However, we always have fun and we cherish every day we have together.” - Leann Kooi

“The Art Department is like a house of family members. We all care for each other and help each other in our work.” - Patience Keen

“It’s always been a family atmosphere” -Payton Lewis

“The Art Department has allowed me a creative outlet and a wonderful group to help me grow as an artist.” - Samantha Rains

“Art is a madman! Being an art student here drives me running toward it.” - Karen Gramajo

“Art opened up new possibilites for me. It allowed me to use my creativity in my daily life. Art will forever be a part of me.” - Ryan Postma

“Art here at Saint Joe is a story and all these stories are waiting to be told to the world.” - TJ Harris

“Art is something that makes the mind unwind and become clearer over time.” - Erik Brebner

“Being an art major at SJC was literally life changing. The professors always pushed me to work hard and dream bigger.” - Ashley Brinkman *2016 Graduate*

“SJC is the epitome of home and community. It’s where you find yourself accepted, flaws and all. It’s a chance you take expecting nothing and gaining everything.” - Katie Davisson *2016 Graduate*

English at SJC ...

“My experience with the English department has been one that shows that unfettered helpfulness and concern for other people lies in all people. I enjoyed being surrounded by this quality in both my fellow students and my professors and hope to take it wherever I end up.” - James Kile

“My only regret is not taking one of Maia’s classes sooner than my junior year.” - Casey Snow

“The SJC English department has been the best part of my SJC experience. I never thought I would be where I am today, and I couldn’t have gotten here without my friends, and of course, Charley, Maia, and April.” - Alyssa Cook

“The best decision of my life was leaving my Biology major and finding a family in the English department.” - Christina O’Connell

“My SJC English experience has been transformative. Both from my professors and the litersture I have read, I have learned about myself, others, and the world. Being an English major has made me a better person. The relationships I have gained with friends and faculty are truly a blessing.” - Kylie Hill

“I could not be more grateful for my time at SJC as an English major. This place has given me everything I could have ever hoped for and more.” -Meghan Hennessey

35 Years

By: Carla Luzadder

35 years is a long long time,
But looking at the pictures in my mind
That really wasn’t such a long long time.
The lasting memories that come to mind,
Hardly seem worth that amount of time.
The focus blurs the longer you’re employed
Like faded film from an old polaroid.
The Saint Joe sports, the actors and plays,
By The Columbian Players, led by John Rahe.
Summers at Lake Banet paved the way
For fall semesters and autumn trees,
With falling multicolored leaves.
Then came the Christmas trees,
The festive activities were special to me.
The pond and the grotto,
The front fountain aglow,
People come and people go.
From Fr. Banet to Dr. Pastoor,
I’ve seen so many walk through that door.
The friends I’ve made and had to let go.
The seasons changed from rain to snow,
Year after year, not many changes to show.
We spend our time racing to the finish line,
Only to get there in record time.
I’m not young, but I’m not that old,
I feel I’m just in a state of limbo.
I don’t know what the future brings,
But in my mind I see many things.
Children to hold and smother with love,
There are many things that I can think of.
Family, art, things to do and see,
I have great hopes for you and me.